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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 BEIRUT 001393

SIPDIS

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TAGS: [EAID](#) [MARR](#) [MCAP](#) [PBTS](#) [PGOV](#) [PINR](#) [PREL](#) [EC](#) [LE](#) [SY](#)
SUBJECT: LEBANON: GOL, GERMANY PLAN TO EXPAND BORDER
PROJECT EASTWARD, UK SEEKS USG HELP TO MAKE PLAN WORK

REF: A. BERLIN 1245

[1](#)B. BEIRUT 812

Classified By: Ambassador Michele J. Sison for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

SUMMARY

[1](#)1. (C) On September 18, a UK Embassy contact briefed PolOff on a recent meeting between the UK DCM and PM Siniora, in which Siniora said that the GOL was ready to extend the German led Northern Border Pilot Project (NBPP) to the east, but that Syria would use its contacts within GOL's security agencies to foil such an attempt. UK Emboff also provided an update on the NBPP, saying that although little to nothing had been achieved from the project, the Germans and GOL were now committed to expanding the failed project eastward. He added that if the UK could not convince the Germans to develop a better strategy for border security than that seen in the NBPP, the UK would seek to at least provide the GOL with the basic infrastructure needed to implement an eastern border project, and would ask for USG assistance in doing so. End Comment.

GOL SAYS BORDER
SECURITY WILL TAKE TIME

[1](#)2. (C) In a September 18 meeting with PolOff, UK Embassy officer Jeremy Chivers (protect) gave a readout of a September 1 meeting between UK DCM Chris O'Conner and PM Fouad Siniora regarding British involvement in providing continued border security assistance to Lebanon. O'Conner told Siniora that the UK was committed to helping GOL security agencies improve their border control capacity and would remain very much engaged with the GOL in this effort. He suggested to Siniora that a steering committee be established as a result of the lessons learned from the German led Northern Border Pilot Project (NBPP). A key take-away from the NBPP was that a Lebanese decision-maker (or preferably a group of them) needed to drive the process,

setting out the vision, the objectives and the benchmarks well ahead of time, according to O'Conner. Once the GOL's vision was clear, then donors could identify what they could do to help achieve it.

¶3. (C) Siniora said he was grateful for the UK's support to the NBPP and hoped it would continue, especially now that there is a plan to expand the project eastward (reftel A). Siniora said an extension of the NBPP could happen, but that it was not realistic to take on the whole eastern border in one go. He implied that the next step should be to slowly expand the current area covered by the NBPP.

¶4. (C) Siniora also criticized what he believed to be the inability of the donor community to provide a good example to GOL security agencies on how to coordinate among one another.

Siniora added that it was unrealistic to expect much public commitment from the Lebanese side for an eastern border project. The Syrians were fervently opposed to the idea of real border security along the eastern border, and had plenty of people in the GOL security agencies who could stall such efforts, according to Siniora. The trick would be to move ahead slowly and not set out too publicly what the end-goal would be, Siniora advised.

NBPP RESULTS
AND UPDATE

¶5. (C) Chivers then briefed PolOff on recent updates regarding the NBPP. He said over the past two years, the

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NBPP had achieved very little. The NBPP's Common Border Force (CBF), made up of Lebanese Armed Forces (LAF), Internal Security Forces (ISF), Lebanese Customs, and General Security (Immigration), is still not operating at full capacity. He said the CBF's command and control headquarters remained inoperable due to the German lead's inability to provide a constant and reliable source of electrical power for the command center's computer server network. He said that at one of the CBF's border crossing headquarters, a local citizen has plugged into the CBF's power generator and is siphoning off power to run his welding shop in clear daylight. When Chivers asked the CBF to intervene and cut the line, they replied that they could not because the individual was too important and well connected to powerful politicians.

¶6. (C) Chivers noted that the USG contribution to the project, approximately \$7 million worth of communications equipment for the vehicles for the CBF's mobile forces, remained unused. He added that the communications equipment for the command and control center and base stations for the checkpoints were installed and functional, but that a lack of power keeps the equipment from being fully operational (reftel B). Chivers blamed the Germans for selecting a vehicle/radio combination that has proven to be incompatible with one another, while failing to provide power for the base stations for the communications equipment at border checkpoints. In addition, the vehicles selected by the Germans were the wrong type, noting that Humvees or Land-cruisers should have been purchased, as opposed to GMC vehicles, given the rough terrain. As a result, many of the vehicles have begun to fall apart and are in need of serious repairs, Chivers said. He assessed that the CBF mobile units are just driving around the northern border with no clear guidance as to what their mission is, nor what it should be.

POOR GERMAN
MANAGEMENT

¶7. (C) Chivers said the Germans' problem was that they were forcing European border security methods and strategies on the Lebanese, without receiving Lebanese buy-in. He believed

the GOL was happy to allow the Germans to manage the project and throw money at GOL security agencies, with little accountability. He thought that under German leadership, an eastern border project would be a repeat of the NBPP. He also mentioned that the Germans had not even been up north in over three months due to security concerns, while UK technical advisors had been made the trip every day.

¶18. (C) He added that the German paper of June 30 (reftel A) concerning how to consolidate the NBPP had not been jointly drafted as the Germans have said, and noted that most of the German recommendations for the consolidation phase of the project had not been met. Neither the donor steering committee, nor the GOL steering committee, had been created. In addition, the recommendation that a border security strategy paper be developed, was only occurring now because the Germans need to meet a deadline to apply for EU Twinning funding, in order to finance an NBPP expansion to the east. Lastly he criticized the Germans for not sending competent people to do the job, noting that the Germans sent a Colonel from the German Federal Police, from a small town, to manage a complicated border security project between the GOL and Syria.

WHAT TO DO KNOW?

¶19. (C) Chivers said the UK would now focus its future border security projects in Lebanon on improving the infrastructure

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along the eastern border, to facilitate GOL security agencies' ability to provide border security. Therefore, Chivers suggested that donors develop forward outposts made up of fifty to sixty container units for the LAF to be stationed in along the border. He noted that he had seen similar setups in Iraq and Afghanistan, where U.S. military forces were stationed along the border in such container outposts. He estimated the cost to be around \$40,000 per container and added that that containers are manufactured in the U.S. by Sea Box, Inc.

¶10. (C) Chivers suggested that the U.S. could fund such a project, and the UK could manage it. He said the containers could be manufactured in one central location in Beirut, where they would be fitted with all the necessary equipment (communications equipment, power generators, etc.) by one manufacturer that would be in charge of certifying and testing all equipment and making sure that all equipment was compatible with one another. He added that all the containers could be linked together by a central communications network, with a headquarters in Beirut, a forward control and command base in the Bekaa Valley, linked to fifty to sixty border outposts. He said it would be impossible to bring Lebanon up to EU standards without having the basic infrastructure in place to provide for the GOL to provided border security along the eastern border, if and when it is ever ready to do so.

COMMENT

¶11. (C) We fully agree with the UK assessment of the deficiencies of the Northern Border Pilot Project. The NBPP has cost over 15 million euros over two years with few results to date. CBF units have so far stopped around 30 fuel smugglers, all of whom were released within two days, and CBF officials claim no weapons smuggling is occurring. (Note: Chivers said explicitly that he and his UK colleagues who are working as technical advisors to the NBPP in the north know that weapons smuggling is occurring across the northern border, and that the CBF knows about it and is choosing to turn a blind eye. End Note.)

¶12. (C) We also believe that German management of the project was been poor. However, it does appear that the political

decision in Germany and Lebanon has been made to expand eastward. The Germans seem to favor supplying equipment and training in the hope that they get some kind of results, as opposed to developing a well-defined project. Therefore, it appears that the UK has decided that if it can not influence the Germans to create a better plan, that it will at least try and give border security implementers operating along the eastern border the basic infrastructure needed to give them a chance at actually implementing the German border security strategy, however weak it turns out to be. End Comment.

GRANT